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ABSTRACT

The workshop, "Adult Learning, Democracy, and Peace," had the important role of examining the relationship among adult learning, democracy, citizenship, gender, civil society, and a culture of peace. The speakers expressed a variety of opinions on the issue of globalization. Some rejected it as aggravating existing social tensions and inequalities and as leading to increased marginalization, while others partially acknowledged that globalization offers fresh possibilities and opportunities. Speakers discussed the following topics: adult learning strategies that are required to meet democratic aspirations and foster a culture of peace; understanding the local, the national, and the global stages and the tensions among them; adult learning for democracy; gender justice; moving from cultural confrontation to intercultural communication; adult learning for an active civil society; adult learning for gender democracy; pedagogical challenges for promoting democracy and a culture of peace; and pedagogical exercises dealing with conflict situations and reconciliation. (YLB)

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ED 434 992

A series of 29 booklets documenting workshops held at the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education

1a Democracy and peace

Adult learning, democracy and peace

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Theme 1: Adult learning and the challenges of the 21st century

Booklets under this theme:

1a Adult learning, democracy and peace

1b Cultural citizenship in the 21st century:
adult learning and indigenous peoples

1c Minorities and adult learning:
communication among majorities and minorities

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Foreword

In July 1997 the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education was held in Hamburg, organised by UNESCO and in particular the UNESCO Institute for Education, the agency's specialist centre on adult learning policy and research. Approximately 1500 delegates attended from all regions of the world, with representatives of 140 member states and some 400 NGOs. In addition to the work of the commissions and plenary which debated the official documents of the Conference The Hamburg Declaration and The Agenda for the Future, there were 33 workshops organised around the themes and sub-themes of the Conference.

As part of its CONFINTEA follow-up strategy, the UNESCO Institute for Education has produced this series of 29 booklets based on the presentations and discussions held during the Conference. The recordings of all the workshops were transcribed and synthesized over one year, edited, and then formatted and designed. A tremendous amount of work has gone into this process. Linda King, coordinator of the monitoring and information strategy for CONFINTEA, was responsible for overseeing the whole process. Madhu Singh, senior research specialist at UIE, undertook the mammoth task of writing almost all the booklets based on an analysis of the sessions. She was helped in the later stages by Gonzalo Retamal, Uta Papen and Linda King. Christopher McIntosh was technical editor, Matthew Partridge designed the layout and Janna Lowrey was both transcriber and translator.

The booklets are intended to draw out the central issues and concerns of each of the CONFINTEA workshops. They are the memory of an event that marked an important watershed in the field of adult learning. We hope that they will be of use both to those who were able to attend CONFINTEA V and those who were not. We look forward to your comments, feedback and continuing collaboration with the UNESCO Institute for Education.

Paul Bélanger,
Director, UNESCO Institute for Education, Hamburg
and Secretary General of CONFINTEA

Adult learning, democracy and peace

Introduction

This booklet reflects the questions raised at the workshop "Adult Learning, Democracy and Peace" at the Fifth International Conference on Adult Education (CONFINTEA) held in July 1997 in Hamburg.

The workshop had the important role of examining the relationship between adult learning, democracy, citizenship, gender, civil society and a culture of peace. It discussed adult learning strategies that are required to meet democratic aspirations, foster a culture of peace, build identities, take into account the globalisation of economies, deal with ecological threats, cultivate active and informed citizenship, alleviate poverty and address gender issues.

The speakers expressed a variety of opinions on the issue of globalisation. Some speakers rejected globalisation as aggravating existing social tensions and inequalities, and as leading to increasing marginalisation, while others partially acknowledged that globalisation is offering fresh possibilities and opportunities. All participants underlined the need of new intercultural learning experiences that help in deepening the understanding of other cultures. The Universal Declaration of Human Rights states that violence can be the consequence of the suppression of democratic aspirations, just as it can be the result of intolerance. Thus democracy becomes essentially interlocked with friendship among all nations, racial or religious groups and with promoting understanding and acceptance of the other.

Substantive democracy and a culture of peace are not given; they need to be constructed. Any effort that emphasises initiative from below, as well as the capacity to recognise diversity, is part of the project of adult learning for democracy and peace.

The session on adult learning, democracy and peace was organised by the UNESCO Institute for Education Hamburg, and the Association of World Education (AWE) Denmark. The first part, chaired by Owe Korsgaard, President AWE, highlighted the international context of adult education with regard to democracy. The second part, chaired by Jacob Erle, also from AWE, focused on the pedagogical challenges of promoting democracy and a culture of peace. It included a practical demonstration of the possibilities of using adult education to prevent conflicts. The panel for the first part included Edicio de la Torre from the Philippines, founding Chairperson of the Education for Life Foundation; Teresa Quiroz Martin, of Arcis University, Santiago, Chile; Shirley Walters, founder Director of the Centre for Adult and Continuing Education at the University of Western Cape, South Africa; Professor Dani W. Nabudere from Uganda, who held a professorship in law at the University of Dar es Salaam, and is currently active in initiating the school project "learn as you work".

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Globalisation, democracy and adult learning

Globalisation is raising new issues for democracy and adult learning. Economic globalisation is leading to the marginalisation of large numbers of people. Many countries are facing major problems concerning human rights and equity. Even in countries that are experiencing high economic growth rates there are growing disparities between rich and poor. Governments are often left with little choice but to accept structural adjustment strategies proposed by external agencies.

When countries have to adjust their economies to compete effectively internationally this creates training opportunities for people to master new technologies. But it also creates social problems, dislocation and disruption of communities, often jeopardising effective participation in democratic political processes.

Drastic cuts in essential services such as health and education have led to social tensions and loss of political credibility for governments. Civil societies have become weaker and people are becoming increasingly demoralised. Culturally, moreand more peopleare succumbingto the homogenising tendencies of the global market-place.

The 21st century must cope with the reality that globalisation – just as the history of the development of capitalism – creates centres and peripheries, as well as new contradictions within a new global competitive context. At the social level this can mean unemployment, poor conditions of work, as well as discrimination in access to benefits and services. Other dangers include the jeopardising of basic social rights, such as the right to education and health.

Adult learning is confronted with new social, political, economic and cultural issues that are linked to globalisation – a key concept in our understanding of the world today. Globalisation is also opening up new possibilities for world-wide information exchange and communication. Both the global risks and the new opportunities facing today's societies make the participation, creativity and competence of all citizens a necessity, a key to the prevention of intolerance and racism and the building of a democratic world.

Discussing globalisation implies:

- rethinking the asymmetrical relationship between technology, society and the economic life of countries;
- critically analysing the current globalisation trends at the local and global levels, in order to arrive at a better understanding of them;
- discussing the different views on the significance of globalisation;
- working on the central perspective of globalisation and re-assessing the neo-liberal model in order to understand its consequences;
- understanding that individuals have more than one identity;
- identifying the conflicts that are now being intensified through the processes of globalisation;
- developing a more holistic and strategic framework in responding to globalisation, using its strengths and opportunities, as well as recognising the inequalities it creates.

Designing strategies to reinforce democracy and peace

Forward-looking strategies relying on adult learning are required to promote democracy, equality and gender justice, and strengthen human rights from the local, the national and regional level to the global level, and to construct a culture of peace and of substantive democracy.

Peace and democracy require new adult learning policies to include the excluded and reach those who today are not being reached by regular channels of education, cannot participate and do not count as full citizens.

The expectation of continued expansion of economic markets in a global economy assumes that education is one of the driving forces behind the new path of economic development. However, this form of education tends to focus on quantifiable results such as levels of literacy and numeracy. Seldom does it deal with culture, democracy and other less measurable things.

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It is a regrettable fact that education has been provided unequally, and those without economic resources are at a disadvantage when it comes to competing in a system of human capital formation provoked by economic globalisation. Perhaps more discouraging is the possibility that the benefits to be derived from the human resource explosion and "education for all" may not be realised.

New strategies to reinforce civil society, democracy and peace:

- making democratisation, culture, human rights, gender justice, diversity and peace essential components of any educational project;
- ensuring that adult learning contributes to the attainment of gender equality;
- including adult learning for democracy in the agenda of every proposal and action in gender relations;
- guaranteeing equal opportunities in education.

Understanding the local, the national and the global

One of the challenges for adults in the context of globalisation is to grasp the different meanings attached to the local, the national and the global, as well as to understand the tensions between them.

The local is to be understood as pertaining to an area with its own geography, history and culture. While it is important to keep in mind that nations have been products of both colonialism and resistance, larger national identities have emerged in opposition to the definitions given by the colonisers. The global impinges on the local in several ways - economically, politically and culturally. For example, economic globalisation may threaten traditional livelihoods. Global media also influences peoples' imagination. Though it can open new perspectives, it can also breed homogenisation in tastes and consumption.

The globalisation of the economy may open up possibilities for a global civil society and international solidarity, but it can also expose new divisions and rivalries.

Democracy

Democracy, understood as parliamentary democracy, guarantees citizens' rights to choose their governments, express their opinions and create associations. Adult learning is needed to inform citizens on their rights and responsibilities. But democracy also means the active participation of citizens at local, national and global levels. Democracy in this sense has been achieved through collective action and is often the way for new social movements. Adult learning is both an outcome and a tool of democracy.

Adult learning for democracy means:

- self-determination, participatory skills and informed citizenship;
- social commitment to build a society that favours more liberty, gender equality, solidarity and equity;
- opportunities for every citizen to exercise her or his rights to participate fully in the construction of a more just society, and to become involved in social decision-making and train his or her capacity to work with others.

Gender justice

In all the UN conferences during the last 20 years on women's empowerment it has been stressed that women are central to the economy, politics and to social and cultural development. Substantive democracy cannot be achieved without practising gender democracy, an issue that cuts across the categories of class, colour, ability and geographical area. Nevertheless, the situation of women has not improved – has even in some cases worsened – in many countries.

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Focusing on issues of gender justice is central to all aspects of adult learning. But the issue of gender needs to be dealt with more holistically than in the past. Overcoming gender inequalities through adult learning is only possible by an engagement of both men and women.

Gender justice

- is a matter of human rights and a condition for social justice and should not be seen in isolation as a women's issue only;
- involves society as a whole, central to effective democracy in the state, economy and in civil society, and reaches from the smallest family units to the largest economic and political structures;
- cannot be viewed in isolation from the broad context of discrimination that women face.

From cultural confrontation to intercultural communication

The challenge of the 21st century, as far as adult learning is concerned, is to face these problems of globalisation and marginalisation by moving from cultural confrontation to intercultural communication, and to recognise cultural diversity as a positive human value.

Intercultural communication and understanding are lifelong processes, just as culture is ongoing and dynamic. They are particularly important at a time when many communities are striving to defend their local identities against the effects of globalisation and marginalisation. The aim of these local processes is to promote democracy by encouraging dialogue, solidarity and the reconstruction of lost identity.

Active civil society through adult learning

These social issues and global risks facing today's societies are calling upon the participation, creativity and competence of all citizens. In short, adult learning needs to promote an active civil society.

Adult learning for an active civil society requires:

- the formation of a broad coalition of responsible, committed and active citizens;
- the building of new alternative global economic and cultural links by reorganising social relations and responsibilities from the local and the national to the global level;
- the creation of a new global order that involves actors who clearly identify with and commit themselves to the welfare of the community and the ecological system;
- the balancing of the tension between individual freedom and collective solidarity;
- enhancing solidarity and responsibility, feeling the passion as well as the pain of others;
- building the capacities of the weaker sections of society by fostering the strengths of their cultures and promoting their self-determination;
- recognising the multiple options of globalisation, rather than creating a polarity between permanent resistance and co-opted participation;
- helping people to determine their own dreams of development and fulfilment.

Adult learning for gender democracy

In order to move towards gender justice, adult learning is crucial. But adult learning is itself highly gendered and can reinforce gender inequalities if not consciously checked by adult educators at all levels of provision.

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Adult learning for gender democracy requires:

- legislation for adult education which has clear commitments to lifelong learning for women;
- a gender framework which takes into account structural, substantive and environmental issues in places of learning;
- including gender in specific contexts such as national qualification frameworks;
- providing financial support adapted to the life conditions of women;
- rethinking the conception, delivery and hidden curricula of learning programmes.

Pedagogical challenges for promoting democracy and a culture of peace

The right of adults to learn will not be respected unless policies are adopted to that end. There is a need to create a methodology and a pedagogical approach appropriate for adults, and to reinforce research in adult education. The big challenge for adult education is to build on the foundations that it has already laid in different regions, especially with respect to:

- learning conditions of the various social groups;
- concepts and androgogical approaches which deal with self-development and empowerment, with self-esteem, with constructing a stronger civil society and with the organisation of grassroots initiatives according to the needs of everyday life;
- support for participatory methods such as action research and evaluation.

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Pedagogical exercises dealing with conflict situations and reconciliation

Adult learning has an important role to play in helping to solve conflicts between different countries and groups. Adult learning opportunities for all are a critical precondition for stable societies, and for the reduction of the probability of conflict. NGOs and UN agencies like UNHCR and UNICEF have extensive experience of this. The sharpest declines in school enrolments occur in low-income countries suffering from war or internal strife. In many parts of the world, sustained turmoil has led to large segments of entire generations being denied the opportunity to go to school.

Pedagogical initiatives need to promote an understanding of the dynamics of conflict situations and how conflicts arise and, in the absence of just negotiation, escalate to the level of war. When conflicts end, adult learning is also particularly relevant in bringing people to find ways of cooperation. Reconciliations are difficult and can often take a full generation or more to achieve.

Adult education in conflict situations has a double role. In the first place it implies a political agreement which defines and re-defines the relationships between the conflicting actors. In the second place it implies the development of curricular methodologies and approaches to a new situation. More specifically the task of adult educators is to:

help to recognise

- the strengths and the weaknesses within different countries;
- the areas of international cooperation;
- the interdependence between rich and poor nations;
- the political, economic and environmental aspects of conflicting issues;

involve adults in

- acquiring more informed images of the 'other';
- active learning;
- sharing skills and experiences in dealing with real life conflict issues from around the world;
- learning in groups;
- negotiating with persons from other groups;

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explore possible means such as

- use of the object of conflict (e.g. water sharing) to raise issues which would directly concern families and local communities;
- use of the Internet;
- establishing peace committees;
- organising regional meetings focusing on issues around which conflicts are most likely to arise;

encourage

- the local community to participate in adult learning for conflict resolution;
- technical, cultural and research exchanges in the interest of reconciliation;

emphasise

- both internal and external relations;
- the connection and links between people around issues that they once valued and shared in common;
- the understanding of the 'other' party's problem.

A major part of andrologogical techniques should deal with the construction or the modification of the representations of the other. The prejudices and the stereotypes require different methodologies from those of conventional learning.

The involvement of learners in real life situations encourages them to share a variety of skills, backgrounds and efforts.

Many analyses of present conflicts indicate that hatred and violence against the 'other' are ideologically often instigated by highly educated sections of the society, such as political leaders and intellectuals. In this regard, adult learning needs to be directed not only at adults who are vulnerable in conflict situations but particularly at those groups who create conflicts.

Post-conflict resolution brings about several other problems. Reconstructing histories becomes especially problematic in post-conflict situations, because after a conflict the participants views are coloured. The experience of conflict involves new and very fundamental changes in the way the parties perceive each other. Dealing with these new concepts of the 'other' is one of the most fundamental tasks of post-conflict adult learning.

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The CONFINTEA logo, designed by Michael Smitheram of Australia, represents the lines on the palm of a hand. These lines are universal and yet different for each subject. They celebrate cultural diversity and the joy of learning.

Theme 1

Adult learning and the challenges of the 21st century

Booklets under this theme:

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